

Mediator

with Ms. Stephanie Ash, Ottawa County Circuit Court
Family Division – Friend of the Court

Keywords

Circuit Court – A trial court that handles civil suits involving more than \$25,000, criminal cases involving felonies (serious crimes), and family matters. See also Family Division, Friend of the Court.

Child Custody – The responsibility to care for and exercise control over a child.

Child Support – In domestic relations cases, ongoing payments made by a parent to meet the financial needs of that parent's child, including medical, dental, educational, and child care expenses.

Criminal Justice – The study of crime and justice, including causes of crime, security, and the balance of crime control and civil liberties.

Custody Investigator – An employee of the Friend of the Court who investigates, writes reports, and makes recommendations to parents and to the court about child custody and parenting time. This position may also undertake change of residence, change of domicile, established custodial environment, third party custody, and grandparenting time investigations.

Family Division – A division of the Circuit Court devoted to proceedings such as divorce; paternity; child or spousal support; parenting time; child custody; adoptions; juvenile delinquency; child protective proceedings; name changes; personal protection orders; emancipation of minors; waiver of parental consent to an abortion; and guardianships or conservatorships for persons under 18 where the matter arises out of a child protective proceeding, delinquency proceeding, or a domestic relations custody case.

Friend of the Court – The office of the Circuit Court Family Division that investigates and advises the court in domestic relations cases involving minor children. The Friend of the Court Office also enforces court orders in those cases.

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist – A mental health professional trained in psychotherapy and family systems, who is licensed to diagnose and treat mental and emotional disorders within the context of marriage, couples, and family systems.

Major – A field of study at the undergraduate level with requirements to assure a student has a particular level of knowledge.

Master's Degree in Counseling – An advanced degree that prepares individuals to become a licensed therapist. Counseling focuses on understanding how patients function on an individual level and in the context of relationships with family, friends, work colleagues, etc.

Mediator – A neutral third party who assists the parties to a dispute in reaching an agreement to settle their differences. If they do, the agreement is binding.

Order – A direction of a court, which must be followed, made orally or in writing.

Parenting Time – Time a child spends with a noncustodial parent (a parent who does not have custody).

Sociology – The study of human relationships, societies, and institutions.

For more definitions, see the Michigan Judicial Institute's [Handbook of Legal Terms](#).